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Israel to Allow Questioning by U.S.

Four Offices of Unit Linked to Spy Case May Be Closed

By William Claiborne
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JERUSALEM, Dec. 2—Rafael Eitan, the Israeli intelligence operative who has been named a key figure in the spying case against U.S. Navy analyst Jonathan Jay Pollard, will be made available to U.S. authorities for questioning, highly placed Israeli sources said tonight.

Moreover, senior Israeli officials said, four offices gathering science data in the United States that were supervised by Eitan will be closed once evidence is collected proving that they had a dual role of running covert intelligence operations there.

The offices of the Science Liaison Bureau, known by the Hebrew acronym Lekem, are in Washington, New York, Boston and Los Angeles. Two Israeli science attaches, assigned to the Washington and New York offices, already have been recalled to Israel since Pollard's arrest 12 days ago on espionage charges after he sought asylum at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

Israel also has consulates—but reportedly no attaches assigned to Lekem—in Chicago, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Houston, San Francisco and Miami.

Informed Israeli sources said that the two diplomats, Ilan Ravid and Yosef Yagur, also would be made available to U.S. federal investigators and that all documents that Pollard is accused of having sold to Israeli contacts would be returned to Washington.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres' office had no comment tonight about the reports that Eitan would be made available to U.S. investigators. But an aide to Peres said of the reported closing of the Lekem offices, "If you assume that this is the unit involved in the case, then the responsible unit will be closed. I think it speaks for itself."

Another senior government source said that Eitan will be made available for questioning. "He is the supervisor. He will talk to the Americans," the source said.

The official, who spoke on the condition that he not be identified, said that "no date and no place have been set for the talking."

[A U.S. official said in Washington that discussions were under way between the Justice and State departments about the possibility of sending a team of prosecutors and FBI agents to Israel to conduct interviews there. The official said no final decision has been made, but "it appears likely that it is going to occur."]

There have been reports that Eitan, one of Israel's most famous intelligence operatives and a former operations chief for the Mossad intelligence agency, would not be sent to Washington for questioning, but that FBI agents would come here to conduct "interviews."

A diplomatic source who has followed the case closely also said that questioning of Eitan was included in the "generalized agreement" Peres reached with Secretary of State George P. Shultz before Peres issued a qualified statement of apology last night for Israeli involvement in the Pollard spying case.

Peres told a group of American Jewish leaders here today that he had talked with Shultz at 3:30 a.m. Sunday and that "the matter is entirely cleared up." In his apology last night, Peres said Israel would cooperate in the investigation "no matter where the trail may lead."

"I wouldn't be surprised if [Eitan] talks. He is part of the package," said the diplomat, who spoke on the condition that he not be identified.

Israeli sources had said that the closing of the Lekem offices in the United States was a foregone conclusion once they had been exposed as serving a dual role of overtly collecting scientific and technological data and participating in covert intelligence operations.

The usefulness of the Lekem operations had been compromised by publicity anyway, Israeli sources said.

Lekem long has been listed openly in Israeli government agency directories, and it routinely has assigned its employees to foreign cap-

itals to gather data on science and technology from the public record and other nonsecret sources.

However, official Israeli sources said, even though Lekem employees are listed as Israeli Embassy staff members, they report not to the Foreign Ministry but to Lekem headquarters and to Eitan.

Israeli sources said that Lekem, under Eitan's direction, gradually evolved into an independent annex to the traditional Israeli intelligence network headed by the Mossad.

Eitan, an adviser on terrorism to former prime minister Menachem Begin, held dual responsibilities for counterterrorism and scientific data-gathering until he left in October 1984, after Peres came to office.

Attempts to reach Eitan have been unsuccessful. In his only public comment so far, he told the Hebrew daily Maariv that his name had been linked to the Pollard case "by mistake."

Israeli government sources have said that the unit that directed espionage operations in the United States—contrary to an agreement between the two countries against such activities—had operated without the knowledge of Peres, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir or other senior officials of the government.

Meanwhile, Israeli Trade Minister Ariel Sharon, a close political ally of Eitan, said tonight on his return from a speaking tour in South America that he had nothing to do with the Pollard affair.

Sharon, for whom Eitan worked as an assistant security affairs adviser in the government in the mid-1970s, said that "the attempt over a number of days to leak information from Israel, as though Mr. Begin is connected to the subject, or I'm connected, is something that has no basis at all."